



The Death Disk	<p>Mark Twain's "Death Disk" was inspired by the historical account of the execution of Colonel John Poyer of Pembroke, Wales on April 21, 1649. A small child was given the responsibility of selecting which of three rebel leaders of a civil uprising would receive a death penalty. The unfortunate fate was given to Poyer who was shot in front of a large crowd at Covent Garden. In 1883 Twain read about the child's role in the execution in a copy of Carlyle's Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell, (Wiley & Putnam, 1845, pp. 344-345). In his personal notebook, Twain's imagination led him to remark, "By dramatic accident, it could have been his own child" (Notebook #22, reprinted in Mark Twain's Notebooks & Journals, Volume III, 1883-1891, p. 14). In December 1883, Twain wrote his friend William Dean Howells, "Now let's write a tragedy" (Mark Twain-Howells Letters, Volume II, p. 455). In his letter to Howells, he included the manuscript of the closing scene where a young girl unknowingly gives her own father a death sentence. Twain's original version ended in the father's execution.</p> <p>Read by John Greenman. Total running time: 00:25:10</p> <p>This recording is in the public domain and may be reproduced, distributed, or modified without permission. For more information or to volunteer, visit librivox.org.</p> <p>Cover picture Oliver Cromwell by Charles Lucy (~1850). Copyright expired in U.S., Canada, EU. and all countries with author's life +70 yrs laws. Cover design by Annise. This design is in the public domain.</p>	The Death Disk
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